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Ministry of Advanced Education

FIRST-YEAR MED STUDENTS DOUBLED, NURSING SPACES UP 82%

VANCOUVER – Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell presented this year's class of 256 first-year student doctors with white lab coats today to celebrate the fulfilment of government's promise to double the number of spaces for first-year medical students in British Columbia.

"In four short years, our aggressive medical education expansion has resulted in twice the number of first-year spaces available to the talented, dedicated students who will become B.C.'s doctors of tomorrow," Coell said. "I congratulate our partners, whose vision, determination and sheer hard work has turned government's investment into one of the biggest and very best medical schools in all of North America."

As of this year, the Province is funding 256 first-year spaces in the University of British Columbia's faculty of medicine. The program is delivered in collaboration with the University of Victoria, the University of Northern B.C., and all the province's health authorities.

"Just like our population, our physicians and surgeons are aging, and many are nearing retirement," said Health Minister George Abbott. "In reaching this milestone of doubling first-year medical school training spaces, we will be able to better meet the demographic challenges and ensure that we have young women and men graduating and providing critical health-care services to British Columbians all across the province."

Medical students begin their education at UBC for their first semester. In January, 32 students move to the northern medical program based at UNBC, and 32 go to the Island medical program based at UVic. A fourth program in the southern Interior is in the planning stages.

"I would like to thank the government for supporting this innovative model of medical education," said Stephen Toope, UBC president and vice-chancellor. "This ambitious program has allowed us, along with our partners, to attract more medical students to our university and to give them a rich educational experience across the province."

Students in all the medical programs share interactive, simultaneous classes, linked by some of the most advanced audio-visual technology in the world. This distributed learning model is designed to train doctors in a wider range of communities, where many are likely to practise after they graduate.

The Province has also increased the number of student spaces in other health programs this year. Nursing programs have been allocated 326 new spaces, bringing the total increase since 2001 to 3,347, or 82 per cent. Included this year are 244 more spaces for registered nurses, 60 for graduate nursing and 22 for licensed practical nurses programs.

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A range of other health programs – such as radiography technician and medical laboratory technologist – will receive a total of 89 more student spaces this year. Eight spaces each are being added to physiotherapy and occupational therapy programs at UBC. As well, 213 new seats are being added for residential care attendants and home support workers.

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1 factsheet(s) attached.

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FACTSHEET

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MORE STUDENT DOCTORS

- The number of first-year medical student spaces in B.C. has doubled since 2001, growing almost four times faster than the Canadian average when measured per 100,000 population.
- There were no increases in spaces for student doctors in B.C. in the previous two decades, while B.C.'s population grew by 50 per cent.
- In response to the need for more doctors, especially in rural and underserved areas, B.C. launched Canada's first fully distributed expansion of MD undergraduate education in 2004.
- The first expanded and distributed class will graduate in May 2008; the total number of graduates in B.C. will have doubled by May 2011.
- The Province also began increasing postgraduate residency positions in 2003 to accommodate the greater number of graduates from the undergraduate program.
- Today UBC's faculty of medicine offers 224 residencies for Canadian medical graduates to train in 62 accredited postgraduate medicine specialties and subspecialties (e.g., cardiology, family practice, surgery) at a variety of clinical academic campuses.
- All clinical and academic campuses are connected to each other by audiovisual and information technology systems that allow distributed, interactive education to be delivered in real time between all the sites.
- Distribution provides communities with access to a major medical centre committed to training the next generation of doctors as well as more ability to attract and retain new doctors, improving the long-term health of each community.
- To date, the Province has invested more than $290 million in expanding medical training:
  - $134 million for new buildings at the University of British Columbia, the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Victoria, as well as more than $117 million in operating and startup costs for the medical training expansion.
  - $27.6 million for new or renovated teaching space in clinical academic campuses and related facilities, and $14.9 million for audiovisual information technology infrastructure.

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MORE STUDENT NURSES

- B.C.'s nursing student spaces have increased by 3,347 since 2001, or 82 per cent.
- Only 85 spaces were added in the nine years between 1991-92 and 1999-2000 – a total increase of 2.4 per cent at a time when the province's population grew by 21 per cent.
- The number of new nurses who graduated in 2005-06 has nearly doubled since 2001 (1,469 vs. 761).

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